

From: Elie.Charest@a2m.com@inetgw
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/17/02 10:59am
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Madam, sir,

I am not a U.S. citizen, but I do hope that you will consider my opinion to be valid nonetheless, for I am as much affected by Microsoft's monopolistic parties as if I was american.

I work with computers everyday. More than a job, they are a hobby - I often play the role of technical support for friends and family (my aunt actually called me for some info as I was writing this). Although only 32 years old, I have bought my first computer in 1983, and have own at least one ever since (I currently have 3 at home).

I have been following the Microsoft Anti-Trust trial(s) since the very beginning, with great interest. Like many others, I do believe that MS has engaged in monopolistic activities. I also believe that their practices have led to a general stagnation in the quality of their product. However, it would be a difficult feat to effectively remove this monopoly, since they have become a de facto standard, especially with their OS (operating system) and Office suite of productivity software. It is their overwhelming market share, more than the quality of their product or their ruthless business tactics, that have made their monopoly unassailable as far as desktop computing is concerned.

Therefore, I do believe that the only suitable punishment to Microsoft (and they do need to be punished, otherwise they will continue with their unfair practices) is also the only one that has a chance of slowly reversing the perverse effects of their monopoly on healthy competition: to open up (i.e. release to the public) the entire source to the Windows API (application program interface) as well as the proprietary format of their office suites. Since these have become de facto standards, they should not be the property of a single company, but rather public domain and overseen by the appropriate government agencies. This will let other companies compete on a level playing field with Microsoft: other OSes (such as GNU/Linux) will be able to run software designed for Windows (such as MS Office) and Office suites from other companies will better be able to better integrate with that of MS, increasing their usability.

Everyone wins in such a scenario: individual consumers will have access to better, cheaper software, competitors will have a better chance of putting out viable software products, and large organization that have to rein in their IT budgets (such as government agencies) will be able to switch to open-source OSes (Linux, FreeBSD) and still use Microsoft's Office program. Even MS will benefit in the long run - though they might lose sales at first, they will be able to concentrate on providing quality productivity

software instead of managing the monstrous code of MS Windows all by themselves. By open-sourcing their OS (or at least the API), they'll benefit from the large community of voluntary programmers that already contribute to the rapid rise of Linux, Apache, OpenOffice and other successful open source projects.

Thank you for your time,

Élie Charest
Game Designer

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